

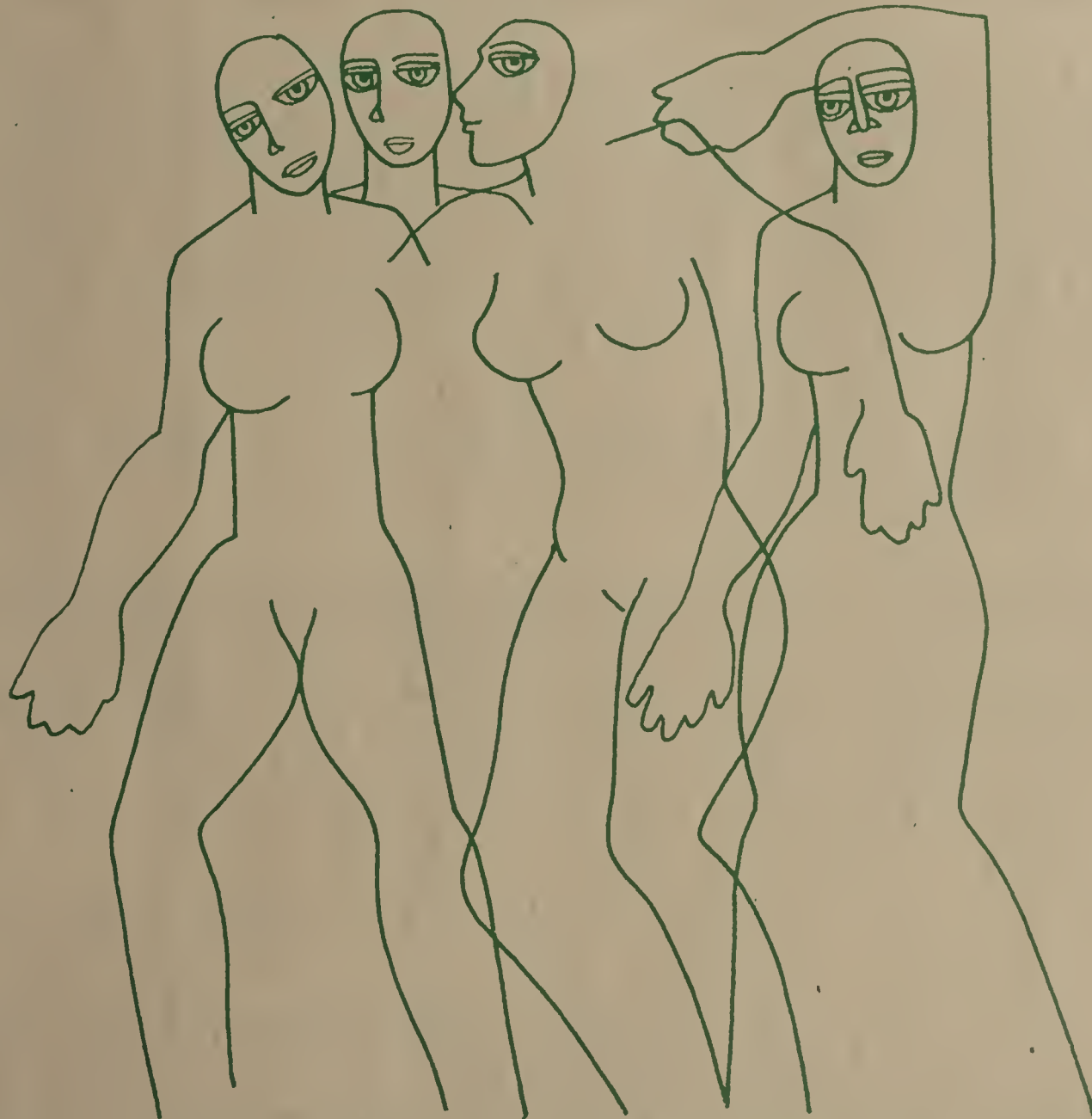
gay community news

Vol. 4, No. 31

January 29, 1977

The Gay Weekly

35¢



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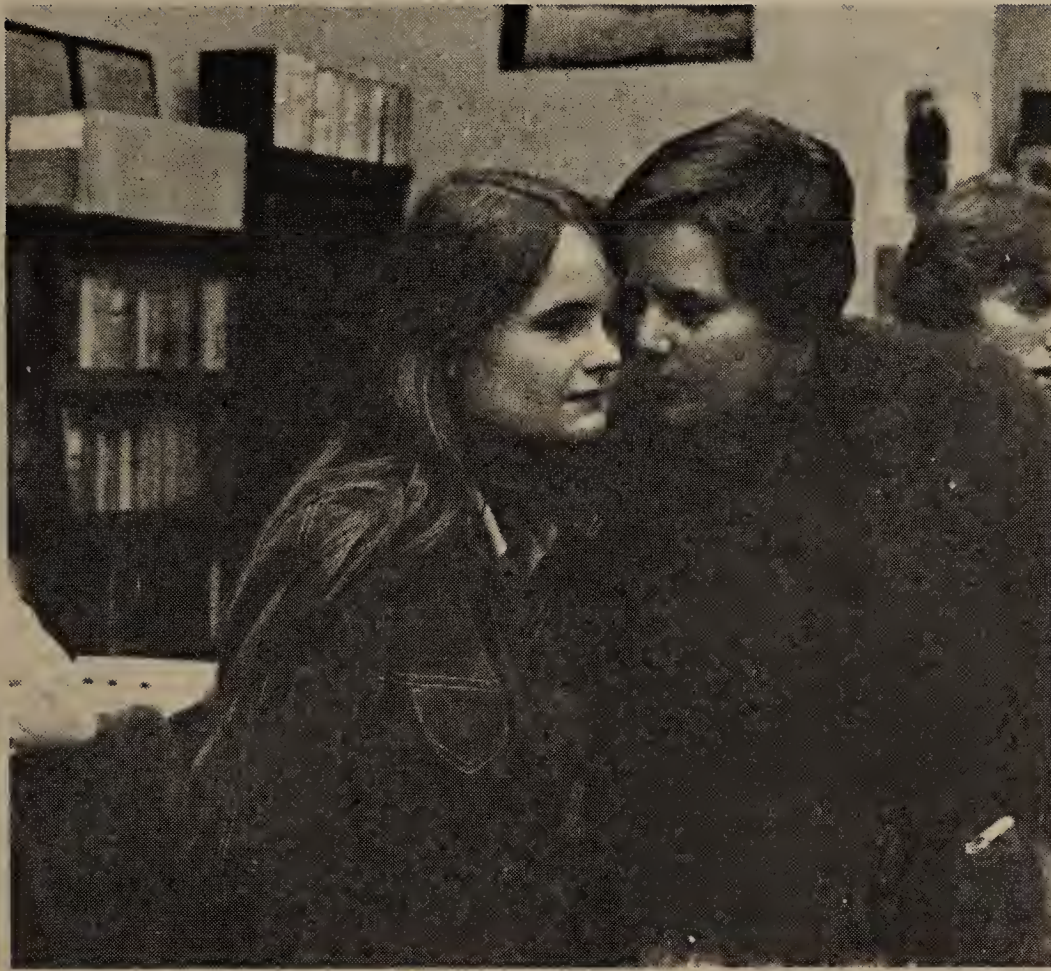
Susan Saxe Pleads Guilty to Lesser Charges

By Nancy Wechsler

BOSTON — Over seventy-five supporters of anti-war activist Susan Saxe, including members of the first jury, crowded around the Suffolk County courtroom as Saxe pled guilty on Jan. 17 to two counts of armed robbery and one count of manslaughter in connection with the 1970 hold-up of the State Street Bank and Trust Company of Boston. A second trial was to have begun on Jan. 24, after the first trial ended in a hung jury.

Judge Walter McLaughlin, accepting the recommendation of District Attorney John Gaffney, sentenced Saxe to 12-14 years at Walpole State Prison to be served at the women's prison in Framingham. The almost two years Saxe has already spent in jail awaiting trial will be counted towards her time and she will become eligible for parole in six years.

The Boston sentence imposed by Judge McLaughlin is expected to run concurrently with a ten-year sentence Saxe is certain to get from a Philadelphia judge for her admitted participation in the break-in at the Newburyport, Massachusetts armory as well as a charge of conspiracy to rob a bank. Saxe will be taken to Philadelphia sometime in the next few weeks to be sentenced on those charges.



Byrna Aronson (left), Susan Saxe's lover, and Jill Raymond, who spent a year in jail for refusing to cooperate with a grand jury investigating Saxe, spent an affectionate moment after Saxe's sentencing. Raymond, who now works with the American Civil Liberties Union's Prison Project, came up to Boston especially for the hearing.

Photo by Nancy Wechsler

Why the Plea?

Why would Susan Saxe agree to plead guilty after her first trial ended in a hung jury reportedly voting 9-3 for acquittal? "I plead guilty today for one reason, and one reason only — that it is the surest and quickest way to end the hold this state will have on my life and my personal freedom." So explained Susan Saxe in a statement read at a press conference after the hearing by defense committee member Leslie Cagan. Saxe, in her statement, stressed that no "deal" was made, as the state got nothing in return for the 12-14 year sentence except her own guilty plea.

Nancy Gertner and Tom Shapiro, Saxe's attorneys, speaking outside the courtroom after the hearing, outlined some of the reasons for the guilty plea. Shapiro told supporters, "It seemed clear to us from statements Judge McLaughlin had made, that he would not have granted us the same number of peremptory challenges as we had during the first trial." Without those extra peremptory challenges the defense team felt that the possibility of getting a fair trial seemed dim. That consideration, combined with the assignment of Judge Roy to preside over the second trial, weighed heavily

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Anita Bryant, Alvin Dark Urge 'No' Vote

Miami Gay Bill Passes As Celebrities Lead Foes

MIAMI, FL — The presence of hundreds of Bible-thumping Fundamentalists, and emotional speeches by singer Anita Bryant and baseball star Alvin Dark proved to be of no avail last Tuesday as Miami's Metro Commission passed a gay rights ordinance. The ordinance — which bans discrimination against Dade County homosexuals in housing, employment, and public accommodations — passed by a 5-3 vote. Enactment of the ordinance makes Miami the first city south of Washington, D.C., and east of Austin, Texas, to protect the civil rights of gay people. The anti-discrimination safeguards go into effect ten days after the Jan. 18 vote and will apply throughout Dade County, including Miami, Miami Beach, Coconut Grove, and Coral Gables.

Opponents of the bill immediately announced that they planned a campaign to gather the necessary 10,000 signatures to force a referendum on the ordinance. Anita Bryant, former Miss Oklahoma, '60s pop singer, and Florida Citrus publicist will lead the recall move. Bryant had told the crowded commission chambers that "I have a right to be jealous of the moral atmosphere in which my children grow up."

Gay activists in South Florida welcomed the possibility of the referendum as "offering an opportunity for consciousness raising." At the same time, they urged an immediate boycott of Florida citrus products to protest Bryant's opposition to gay rights. Although the Citrus Commission members are appointed by the Governor, the citrus

growers pay Bryant's salary to do their advertising. Many gay bars in the Miami area have already posted signs that read, "No Florida Orange Juice Served Here."

In a further protest against Bryant's activities, Club Baths Chain President Jack Campbell, who lives in the Miami area, reportedly removed \$80,000 from a Miami bank. Bryant and her children do a television commercial for the bank, the First Federal Savings and Loan.

Tumultuous Session

Miami's Metro Commission chambers were packed with about 30 gay activists and over 500 opponents as the Commission prepared to vote on the ordinance. The fundamentalists — all carrying Bibles with passages condemning homosexuality underlined — were bused in from two Baptist churches. "It was all very emotional and resembled a church revival meeting," Miami gay activist Alan Rockway told GCN. "Anita Bryant

spoke, Alvin Dark spoke, a woman active against the ERA here spoke. I never knew these people believed in busing, but I guess they do."

There was a 45-minute debate on each side. A former Senator from the state of Washington, A Florida State Senator, and a Miami reform rabbi all spoke out in favor of the ordinance. Alan Rockway, a clinical psychologist, spoke and asserted that the ordinance would help community mental health,

(Continued on page 3)

Carter Names Costanza as Top Aide

WASHINGTON — Margaret (Midge) Costanza, former vice-mayor of Rochester (NY) and a strong supporter of gay rights, has been named to a top spot on President Carter's White House staff. Costanza will serve as Carter's "Public Liason" and her job will be to arrange Carter's meetings with special interest groups and to submit a monthly summary of communications from such groups.

Jean O'Leary of the National Gay Task Force praised the Costanza appointment and told GCN, "At the Democratic Convention at Madison Square Garden, she was extremely helpful and outspoken and tried to get the gay issue in the platform." Interestingly enough, Costanza's opposite number on the Carter staff will be Stuart Eizenstadt, who led platform opposition to the gay rights plank. The plank was never approved.

Tim Mains, former editor of *The Empty Closet*, the Rochester gay monthly newspaper, told GCN that

"Midge has always been an outspoken advocate of human rights here and has been one of few local politicians to actively seek gay support. She has been an advocate for her constituency, too. She has arranged meetings between gay representatives and the Rochester Police Chief on every occasion we have had a complaint."

"Had she not been tapped by Carter for Washington," Mains added, "she would have introduced a human rights ordinance for the city of Rochester which would have created an office of Human Rights to investigate cases of discrimination."

Costanza was one of Carter's earliest supporters in his presidential bid and her position will make her the woman who will be closest to the President. In an article on her appointment *Newsweek Magazine* described her as "fiery" and noted that "she once chewed out her future boss in the saltiest language for waffling on his opposition to abortion." After she was



Margaret Costanza

appointed by Carter, the first question put to her at a news conference dealt with her support for gay rights at the Democratic Convention. Costanza spoke out strongly for gay civil rights, both at that news conference and during a recent interview with the Associated Press.

news notes

FAMILY CHAT

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Gay Liberation was among one of several subjects discussed by Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter and their sons, says the President-Elect's wife in an interview in February's *Ladies Home Journal*. The First-Lady-to-Be said that the generation gap between the Carters and their sons covered "a lot of things, such as marijuana, gay liberation and things like that — but Jimmy always listens and always encourages the children to have their own opinions."

INDIANA BACKS ERA

INDIANAPOLIS, IN — Indiana became the 35th state last week to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to the US Constitution. Supporters of the ERA immediately asserted that the action was a major breakthrough as no state has passed the amendment since North Dakota did so in 1975. The Indiana legislature had twice before rejected the ERA and this time it was passed in the state Senate by a narrow 26-24 vote and in the house by a 54-45 margin.

ERA action is expected in the first few months of this year in North and South Carolina, Florida, Nevada, and perhaps Missouri. 38 states are necessary for the ERA to be adopted.

FOUND GUILTY

BOSTON — An 18-year-old Norwood man was found guilty in Boston Municipal Court on Jan. 14 of "soliciting one to commit an unlawful sex act" and fined \$25 by Judge Mario Umana. The man was one of two men arrested on Nov. 24 on "The Block" in the Back Bay. A strong police presence on "The Block" continued to be reported last week.

FUNDAMENTALIST MENACE

CLEVELAND, OH — A man bent on converting gays to Jesus is roaming the discos of Northern Ohio, *High Gear* reports. Spotted first in Akron, the man reportedly entices young men to his apartment on the pretense of having sex with them and then proceeds to lecture them on the sinfulness of homosexuality. "All Northern Ohioans are forewarned . . . of the Fundamentalist Menace," writes *High Gear*.

PLAIN GAYS

JAMAICA PLAIN — A group for gay women and men in the Jamaica Plain-Roxbury area of Boston is forming, to provide social contact and to discuss issues of mutual concern. For more information, call 524-1842.

VARA MOVING SOUTH

BOSTON — Controversial Boston bar-owner Henry Vara and his partner Frank Cashman have opened a gay bar in Atlanta, David Farrell reported in the *Boston Globe* last week. The bar, the Encore Lounge, began operation at the end of 1976. Vara is listed as president and owner of 40% of the stock of RCV Corporation, for whom the license for operation was granted. Cashman is listed as Vice-President and holder of 40% of the stock.

According to Farrell, Vara has also "been dickering" for a hotel in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. It is not known whether that establishment would be predominately gay.



Photo by David Dahlquist

Paul Kuntzler

GAY MAN HEADS A.D.A.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Paul Kuntzler, an openly gay man who has been active in Washington politics for many years, has been unanimously elected as Interim President of the Greater Washington Chapter of Americans for Democratic Action. Kuntzler will serve until the regularly scheduled elections in May, 1977. ADA has a long-time record of lobbying for liberal causes, and the Washington chapter is known for its strong stand on gay rights.

Kuntzler is a founder of Washington's Gertrude Stein Democratic Club and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Gay Rights National Lobby. He recently ran unsuccessfully for the position of delegate to the Democratic National Convention.

MASCULINITY MEET

DES MOINES, IA — Plans are underway for the third conference on Men and Masculinity to be held this year in Des Moines, Iowa, during the last week in March. For more information write to Harold Wells, 2718 University, Des Moines, Iowa. GCN will publish more information on the conference when we receive it.

LOBOTOMY, ANYONE?

SEATTLE, WA — Dr. Walter Freeman, often called the "Dean of Lobotomy," stated recently that women who are lobotomized make good housekeepers. "Women of all ages," he said, "make up the great majority of cases and the successes of psychosurgery. From the available evidence, it would appear that it is difficult for a man to support a family after a lobotomy, but it is easy for a woman to do housework." A lobotomy is an operation that "pacifies" patients by surgically manipulating the brain.

'HER-ICANES' REMAIN

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The National Weather Service has announced that it will continue to name hurricanes after women, despite some protests. "There hasn't really been enough pressure in effect for a change," Bob Pifer, hurricane programmer told the *New York Times*. In 1972 a Miami feminist urged the Weather Service to stop naming hurricanes after women and name them after US senators instead. Since then, Australia has changed its policy and begun giving both male and female names to cyclones.

According to Pifer, names for hurricanes are selected by a federal interdepartmental panel. But, admits Pifer, "yes, as a matter of fact, they are all men" on the panel.



SOCIALIST FEMINISTS

AMHERST, MA — A Socialist Feminist Symposium is being planned at Hampshire College in Amherst to be held on the 3rd weekend in February. Anyone interested in planning or otherwise becoming involved should contact Cindy Carmichael at (413) 549-4600, ext. 325 or Jeanne Fortin, Box 835, Hampshire College.

GAY AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Washington, D.C., Gay Activists Alliance is planning a "gay awareness campaign" which will feature posters to be placed on Metrobuses, trash cans, and other locations throughout the nation's capital. One poster depicts a group of people dressed in a variety of clothing styles. The headline reads, "Someone in your life is gay" with a caption that continues, "Think about that the next time you hear us called something else."

JESUITICAL PROTEST

NEW YORK — A small but vocal group came out in the cold last week to protest against the decision of the New York Jesuit province to bar the ordination of an openly gay man. The protesters, many of them members of Dignity, the organization of gay Catholics, protested at the residence of Rev. Albert Bartlett, vice-principal for priestly preparation for the New York Province. Rev. Bartlett has stated that the ordination of the openly gay man, Thomas Sweetin, would be "difficult."

Sweetin, who has already finished 13 years of Jesuit education, told WNEW-TV news, "Reverend Bartlett says that the issue is that I'm gay and that it's known. And therefore, to ordain me would be to set some sort of policy. Yet, on the other hand, he says that there is no policy. And I'm saying to him, have the courage, then, to do it."

When asked if it "would make any difference to Fr. Bartlett" if he were not open about his gayness, Sweetin said, "The problem is that they worry Fr. Bartlett is worried that other people know that he knows . . . that I'm gay."

Philadelphia Gays Debate Rights Bill Compromise

By Tommi Avicoli

PHILADELPHIA, PA — About 50 people crowded the small headquarters of Dignity on Jan. 10 to discuss the fate of a possible new gay rights bill, which could soon be introduced into the Philadelphia City Council. Last year's gay rights bill, #1275, was defeated when the Law and Government Committee of City Council refused to bring it to the floor. Now the gay community must make an important decision concerning the new bill.

John Anderson, Counsel to City Council President George X. Schwartz, told Harry Langhorne, president of Gay Activists Alliance recently that Schwartz might be willing to support a bill if the following areas of employment were excluded from protection in the bill: 1) the Fire and Police Departments; and 2)

Corrections Guards in institutions working with juveniles.

The question of whether to compromise and delete these areas from the bill was debated in the gay community for a few weeks prior to the meeting. The *Gayzette*, Philadelphia's weekly gay newspaper, urged "No Compromise" in an editorial a few days before the meeting. "The gay community is supposed to give up the protection we dearly need in the area of employment. What do we get in return? We get a vague, second-hand statement that the proposed bill would be more pleasing to George Schwartz!"

At the Jan. 10th gathering, Harry Langhorne, in his opening remarks, listed what he saw as the choices open to Philadelphia gays. According to his analysis, gays could 1) make specific exemptions from the bill, listing certain jobs which would not be covered; 2)

delete the category of employment altogether; 3) push for the entire bill, as originally conceived, with housing, employment and public accommodations being covered; or 4) not introduce a bill into Council at this time.

Langhorne was confident the gay community could get two sponsors to introduce the bill, and he said Mayor Rizzo would probably sign it if and when it reached his desk. Many of those present laughed when he made the remark about the Mayor, who is not known for his "high consciousness."

The arguments in favor of compromise stressed that "something is better than nothing." Those who espoused this point of view felt a bill without compromise had no chance at all. They suggested introducing an amended bill first, then later introducing a second measure to cover the areas deleted.

"By then," someone said, "the public's consciousness will have been raised and we can get it through."

Those arguing for no compromise (as the *Gayzette* had done) stressed that there was no guarantee that the bill would pass, even with the two sections exempted. "We have the strength to push for a full bill," Sherrie Cohen of Dyketaetics told the 50 activists. "We underestimate our own power."

In a straw vote taken to determine how the majority of those present felt about the idea of compromise, most people felt they did not want to give in to Schwartz' suggestions. They wanted the original bill introduced. However, a final vote was never taken, even after hours of often heated discussion. It was decided, instead, that the people gathered did not really represent the whole gay community. "There's mostly white males in this room," a woman in the back yelled. "We need to get more blacks, more women here," someone else echoed.

A media "Outreach Committee" was formed to leaflet the bars, and specifically notify those parts of the community not represented at the Jan. 10th meeting.

The group which met on Jan. 10th has no official name yet; last year it unofficially called itself the "Committee for a Gay Rights Bill." With the steady decline of the city's largest gay group, Gay Activists Alliance (now only attracting a handful of people to its biweekly meeting; it formerly met weekly), the fate of the new gay rights bill will rest in the hands of the "Committee for a Gay Rights Bill."

Miami Gay Ordinance Passes in 5-3 Vote

(Continued from page 1)

by "preventing anxiety." Probably the most moving moment in the debate came when Bob Kunst, co-chairperson of the Dade County Coalition for the Humanistic Rights of Gays, ended his speech with the ringing "we are your children . . ." Pro-ordinance spokespeople emphasized that under Florida law it may be illegal to commit homosexual acts but that it is not illegal to be a homosexual.

No Surprise

The vote itself came as no surprise to gay activists. "We knew we had the votes," said Alan Rockway. "The one commissioner who was absent called me on the phone and told me that if he was needed, he would come. The three people that voted no — who included Steve Clark, Mayor of Metro Dade County, and a black commissioner — all did so for their own political reasons. Even the two conservatives on the commission voted 'yes.' I think

they all made a deal in advance as to how they were going to vote and wanted to get it over as quickly as possible.

"One of the main things that's always argued against ordinances like this one is that no one can really prove that there is discrimination against gays. In this case the venom of the opposition proved it. It was they, not us, who came across looking like hysterical radicals," said Rockway. "We just hope that we can turn on the opposition to attacking us like this in Lauderdale too, where we are running a candidate for mayor." (see story, this week's issue.)

Who is Anita Bryant and Why Does She Hate Us?



MIAMI, FL — During the 1960s Anita Bryant stood center stage in Middle American culture. She had three solid gold records — "Till There Was You," "Paper Roses," and "My Little Corner of the World." She made seven USO Christmas tours of Vietnam with Bob Hope, and sang "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" at Lyndon Johnson's funeral. These days Anita is mostly known as television and magazine publicist for the Florida citrus industry. "She used to have such a beautiful voice," said a salesperson in the record department at Boston's Jordan Marsh Department store, "but now no one buys any of her records any more. Sometimes we have them on the \$1.98 racks but I haven't seen any in a long time."

But now Bryant has emerged as the South Coast's number one "gay-baiter." "I am very jealous of the

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Gay Runs for Ft. Lauderdale Mayor

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Fort Lauderdale gays have announced the candidacy of Roger Lockett, a 45 year-old real estate broker, to run for mayor in this resort city's upcoming elections. The election is a "free-for-all" with 19 candidates running for five seats as city commissioners. The candidate who gets the highest amount of votes becomes the mayor. Because of the fragmented nature of the voting, a high gay turnout could assure Lockett's election as one of the commissioners. "I'm pretty sure he'll be elected city commissioner, if not mayor," local activist Allan Rockway told GCN.

Lockett's decision to run for public office comes in the wake of an anti-gay campaign being waged by the city's current mayor, E. Clay Shaw. Shaw had asked for an investigation of gay hotel interests in Lauderdale and also denounced the rise of male

prostitution. "If a family from the midwest comes to Fort Lauderdale and sees men making love on the beach, what will they think?" the mayor asked. "They'll never come back. We are a family community, not just a tourist town. I don't intend to allow that image to be tarnished for the expediency of a few dollars."

The mayor's remarks stirred an immediate storm and brought about the speedy politicization of the city's large (and wealthy) gay community. Although Shaw was backed in his anti-gay campaign by the Fort Lauderdale Resort and Hotel Association, some members of the Chamber of Commerce and others, he has also been strongly criticized. State Rep. John Adams (D-Hollywood) called Shaw's comments "dirty politics" and a *Fort Lauderdale News* editorial assailed the Mayor's "hip shooting remarks."



Ellen Marie Barrett, the first lesbian ever ordained as an Episcopal priest, takes her vows at a ceremony in New York's Church of the Holy Apostles (see GCN Vol. 4, No. 30). Seated is the right Reverend Bishop Paul Moore of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. During the ceremony Bishop Moore praised Rev. Barrett as "highly qualified intellectually and spiritually to be a priest."

Photo by Bettye Lane

community voice

gayly speaking

An open letter to the Boston Gay Community:
As we prepare for our sixth year of operation, the Gay Speakers Bureau invites you to join us in the expansion of our speaking services.
Since 1972, we have spoken to thousands of people in New England's schools, churches, synagogues, and social and professional organizations — sharing with them our own personal experiences: growing up gay, gay relationships, relationships with family and friends, instances of prejudice, gay social and political life . . . every aspect of how we personally understand and experience our own gayness. In addition to our grass-roots educating of straight people, our speaking has also reached out to the gay people in our audiences; we often receive feedback from audience members who have felt support from us in their process of coming to terms with their own gayness or the gayness of a close friend or relative.

We are now expanding our program; in 1977 we hope to more than quadruple our activities, speaking personally with over 10,000 people. This is exciting work, and we want and need you to join us in making our plans a reality. We are not asking for money — what we need is volunteers. We need people who will help with typing, sending out mailings, researching and compiling resource materials, answering the telephone, and scheduling speaking engagements. We ask that you share with us what you can — an hour, five hours, a week. We also have an ongoing need for speakers — gay individuals who are willing to discuss their lives with groups of interested people.

You can learn more about the Gay Speakers Bureau, what it is and where it is heading, by coming to the Gay Men's Center Forum on Tuesday, Jan. 25, at 7:30 p.m., 36 Bromfield St., Boston. This forum is open to both women and men. If you cannot attend, but are interested in participating in the Bureau, call us at 354-0133 (11 a.m. to 10 p.m.).
Help wipe out homophobia in *your* lifetime!
Sincerely,
David Peterson
Coordinator, Gay Speakers' Bureau

a terrifically loose adjective

Dear GCN:
Re Stephen Blevins' article "New Voice in Boston (GCN, 1/15/77).
So Judy Henske "would have made a terrific" lesbian, huh? That's wonderful! What does it mean? Who wouldn't make a terrific lesbian? Bessie Smith? Pixie Palladino? Ronald Reagan.
Yours for terrific lesbianism and journalistic specificity,
Don Shewey
Cambridge

(S.B. replies: Bessie Smith WAS a terrific lesbian — at least part-time. If the writer thinks that Pixie Palladino or Ronald Reagan would make terrific lesbians, I'm glad he hasn't the power to decide.)

CORRECTION
In last week's newspaper we incorrectly listed a phone number at which the Connecticut Gay Task Force could be reached. The number should have been listed as (203) 247-1771.

job bias charged

Dear GCN:
I'm writing in reference to a job opportunity classified that you listed in the Jan. 22 issue. The ad listed as follows:
LABORERS
For temporary work at "The House," pick and shovel, etc. \$2.75 an hour. 783-5131.
I called there and wasn't even given a chance to say where I've worked, what my qualifications were, etc.
The comment I received was "Are you calling for someone else?" Then he abruptly excused himself for a more important phone call.
I just want to say that I was very disappointed to find discrimination in a paper I'm so fond of and respect. It's one place I didn't expect to find it. So much for the Gay Community.
Regretfully,
Jo Ann Schwartz

(Ed's note: If this was in fact a case of discrimination and not a case of talking to the wrong person or mere disorganization, GCN deplotes the fact. We certainly deplore any discrimination that may come about in any response to an advertisement in our newspaper. However, although we do try to be as careful as possible, we cannot always predict or be responsible for the actions of individual advertisers.)

styx and stones

Dear GCN:
I would like the gay community to be aware of a repulsive incident in which I was involved the other night. The evening began in a pleasant fashion. My roommate and I invited some friends over to help celebrate the birthday of a women friend. We left the house in high spirits and headed towards Delmonico's piano bar. Despite the fact that our ages and life-styles were obviously different from the other people there, we were treated with utmost respect and friendliness. The entertainer even sang "Happy Birthday" for our friend before we left.
We then headed for Styx. Being the last of the seven of us to enter the bar, I was stunned when I saw my roommate — who had been leading the way — bolt past me and out the front door. I ran out after him to find out what was going on. HE explained to me that the doorman had carded the only non-male, non-gay member of our group. Even allowing for poor judgment on the part of the doorman, it is mighty curious how he could let in my roommate — who might conceivably be taken for a minor — and then card the woman right behind him who at age 29 could hardly be taken for a minor.
My roommate was so humiliated and embarrassed for our friend by the ubiquitous, sexist behavior of the doorman that all he could do was leave. I went back inside, though, to state my mind. When I told him what I thought, the doorman's reply came in the form of a snotty affirmation of his authority to eard whom he pleased. I tried to make him see that he was feeding a societal disease called sexism, which is the fundamental source for the oppression of both gay people and women alike.
The doorman's final response to my accusation was a verbal and physical threat that I leave the bar at once. When I told him that I would bring this to the attention of the management and owners, he proceeded to jump at me. One of my friends broke in between us before any actual violence took place and I left.
If there is any moral to this story it may be that gay people should go to places like Delmonico's Piano bar where one is not judged by sex, welcomed to spend money, and treated with respect.
Sincerely,
Clifford Bair



obnoxious ads

Dear GCN:
I wish to protest two very obnoxious advertisements that appeared in recent issues of GCN, to wit:
In the Jan. 15th and 22nd issues is an ad for a benefit for the Gay Men's Center at Chaps, showing two faceless denim-clad males, one of them with a handkerchief in his rear pocket. The atmosphere of the picture is of a meatrack. I had thought that the Gay Men's Center, of all groups, sought to provide an alternative to such dehumanization.
The Jan. 15th issue also contains an ad by Sack Theatres for the film "Madam Kitty," with the headline: "Depraved Decadent Damned/ Nazi Germany 1939." I am especially insulted that Sack, which had the insensitivity to show "Snuff" last winter, now thinks that we are appropriate audience for another trashy exploitation. The misogyny of "Snuff" is equalled by their anti-gay attitude in advertising "Madam Kitty" here.
John Kyper

puerto rico libre

Dear GCN:
Although we recognize Jeff Britton's good intentions ("Puerto Rico — No Liberation Stronghold," GCN, Jan. 22, 1977), his view of Puerto Rico is distorted by superficial observation, ignorance and total lack of radical perspective. We use the term radical with its true value: roots. It is too easy to say that machismo, Catholicism and underdevelopment dominate all spheres of Puerto Rican culture, even homosexual relations. It is easier still for someone who visits the island for a few days and then returns to his/her North American gay circle. But anyone who is willing to look beyond "the island's landscape and magnificent natural beauty" will discover that the root of the situation that Britton diagnoses as simple "resentment" is colonialism. But perhaps this is hard to accept.
The Puerto Rican unconsciously feels that even gay relations are subjected to the roles of "buyer or seller, predator or prey, dominant or submissive" because *all* human relations in a colony — not on the sexual relations — are determined by the feeling of dominion and control imposed by the colonizer over its colony. Only when Puerto Rico gains its political freedom can that "gay liberation" Britton longs for be achieved. At present we only need from our gay sisters and brothers a more profound and *radical* understanding of our situation, not a simplistic and naive one. You don't have to be a Fanon to see that personal violence and resentment have deep political roots!
Viva Puerto Rico Libre!
Efrain Barradas
James Schultz

politely, women's-space

Dear GCN:
As a frequent patron of the Saints (for over 2 years), I would like to say a few words in response to the letter (Jan. 15, 1977) suggesting "non-saintly behavior" on the part of the Wimmin at the Saints.
It has been my experience that when men have "wandered" into the Saints they have been treated with politeness, and also have been informed of their legal right to be there. Then they have been told it would be preferred that they leave — because it is a Wimmin's bar.
"Rudely Ordered" is pretty strong phrasing and frankly, I don't buy it.
I can only think of one instance when a man was treated rudely, and he was obviously drunk and had to be escorted out by the police.
I have always found the employees at the Saints to be polite and friendly even when dealing with men who have mistakenly wandered in.
I think that what we have seen is maybe a little exaggeration by the writer (a second-hand account no less) to make a point.
It has been my experience that when these situations have arisen they have been handled with tact and politeness. If this is an "accurate" account it is indeed a rare one.
Terry Barrett

noble distinction

Dear People:
I get tired of having to write these letters, but I simply will not sit silently by when I feel I know more about something than all the mouths already shooting off!
The media would have us believe that there is no difference between Elaine Noble and Barney Frank as gay rights advocates. We in the gay community had better realize the distinction.
Barney Frank introduced the gay rights bill when no one else would — his district had a large gay population. He filed the same bills every year. Did they make it successfully out of committee? Did they get to more than one roll call vote on the floor of the House? or to the Senate to lose by only 3 votes? Did he seriously study the bills, drafted by an inexperienced gay committee, to see that they were improperly or poorly drafted in places? Did he then go to House Counsel or to the Attorney General's office for advice and help on rewriting the bills or to present a fresh angle? Did he collar, corner, coax, cajole, and work to form coalitions and allegiances for votes on the bills? Elaine Noble did.
And just because the media, here and across the country, both gay and straight, has made her some kind of freak celebrity doesn't mean she isn't a savvy, hard working street pol who knows her work and her district. Fenway residents have seen more monies for services and renewal projects and such in the last two years than in the previous fifty years.
Barney Frank is an extremely brilliant, witty, capable, caring, liberal legislator, but he is not the gay rights advocate on Beacon Hill (nor is he a feminist, but I won't go into that distinction), and anyone who thinks otherwise simply doesn't know what the hell goes on behind the scenes in the real nitty-gritty work on the Hill. There is only one person up there who is *FIGHTING* for gay rights and to whom gay rights is a top priority.
Open your eyes and see what all the media is glossing over, and, damn it, understand what they're doing and who they're doing it to.
Please!
Linda Lachman



gcn contributors

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speaking out

Is Women's Cruising All 'Spiritual'?

By J. Faye Wolfe

The other night, my roommate remarked that he is getting tired of the action on the Esplanade. He doesn't like bars, but what's a guy to do? His next words were a thought-provoking question — "Where do the dykes go? I never see any of you on the Fenway."

My mind shot back to a course entitled "Homosexuality in Western Literature" which I took at one of our local universities. In one class, derogatory remarks were being made by a politically-correct lesbian-feminist concerning the cruising habits of gay men. Most of the other women, while somewhat less militant about it, seemed put off by such phenomena as "tea rooms," baths and bushes in the park. A couple of men protested, saying that they had met people in some of these places who became more than a nameless trick.

Finally, one woman made the astute observation that the absence of women cruising the banks of the Charles is due, in part, to certain restrictions placed upon us by our anatomy and the clothing in which we package it. Before you start screaming "penis envy," I'd better explain that what my friend meant was, that if it was more convenient for us, my roommate would be running into women at his favorite garden spots.

I have a somewhat-tested hypothesis that a lot of women at the various lesbian rap groups, bars, and gay lit courses around town would flatly deny any desire to enter into cruising of any sort — especially the sort which is characterized by the

blatant "carrying-on" which has become the domain of our gay brothers. Despite the denials, I had to admit to my roomie that his gay sisters have discreet euphemisms for what he would call cruising (minus the above indiscretions).

Next, or maybe first, one checks-out the myriad taverns which are designed to keep us out of the straight "Ken and Barbie" bars. In those bars, if a man asks a woman to dance because he finds her physically attractive he is "sexually objectifying" her. In a gay bar where men are present, if a man is dancing with a man it's because they are treating each other as sexual objects. But when a woman asks a woman to dance, it's because the first woman finds the second spiritually and esthetically beautiful. At one bar, which I used to frequent, discretion was once again the word as women at the bar peeked from behind their drinks to case-out the people coming in the main entrance.

I'm not suggesting for a minute that the "Ken and Barbies" are an example to be revered or copied. I am suggesting that there is a valuable lesson for gay women to learn from those gay men on the Fenway. While I must admit that exposing my bare essentials to the public doesn't appeal to me, (especially this time of year), there is something to be said for laying the cards on the table.

Most of my men friends are intelligent, well-brought-up, feminist-oriented people who accept their socio-sexual meeting places for what they are. As my roommate said, it gets tiresome after a while. Those euphemisms we use get tiresome after awhile, too.

Why We Should Care About Nuclear Energy

By Allen Young

Do gay people have a stake in the growing movement against nuclear power and for alternative sources of energy? Is there any connection between the gay liberation movement and the "no nukes" movement? I would like to suggest that the answer to both questions is a resounding "yes!"

Already there are hints of connection between the two movements, both of which, I believe, are among the vital progressive forces of the 1970s and 1980s. In a recent issue of GCN, Neil Miller wrote an excellent article concerning Karen Silkwood, the woman who knew so much about the dangers of nuclear power that she was probably murdered. In his article, Miller shows how Silkwood's lesbianism was used to discredit her. Also, in a recent issue of GCN, members of the Clamshell Alliance, the coalition fighting the Seabrook (N.H.) nuclear power plant, placed a classified ad urging gay people to get involved.

GCN has also reported the homophobic policy of *Mother Earth News*, which has refused advertisements from the country faggot magazine *RFD*. *Mother Earth News*, the major publication of the back-to-the-land people, typifies the macho values that poison that movement from time to time. While many of its articles inform readers about alternative sources of energy, it promotes the country lifestyle strictly in the context of traditional sex roles, family life, and competitive, capitalistic values. GCN readers wishing to protest *Mother Earth News*' anti-gay policies, in particular this refusal to publish an ad for *RFD*, should write to John Shuttleworth, publisher, *Mother Earth News*, Hendersonville, NC. (Mister Shuttleworth, according to a recent report in *New Times* magazine, recently moved into a \$100,000 home with, get this, an electric garage door opener!)

Of course, gay people were present (myself among them) at the big "no nukes" rally near Seabrook last October. There was no gay contingent as such, however, and the good feeling I had attending the rally would have been all the more accentuated if I had been with a group of gay people. For social reasons alone, such a contingent would be nice. Also, it gives us gay people an opportunity for visibility and would help some of our brothers and sisters come out of the closet. But most of all, I think we gay people have a special contribution to make.

The anti-nuclear movement is part of an overall critique of the role of technology and industrialism in American society. In his series of articles on gay people and religion, printed in *Fag Rag* over the past two years and now available in book form from *Fag Rag*, Arthur Evans shows how the development of male supremacist homophobic attitudes in society parallels the destruction of nature-worshipping matriarchal religions. In other words, the pattern of dominance of men over women in human relations has its precise analogue in the development of patriarchal attitudes toward nature. These attitudes are the ones we grew up with — they state that human beings are the highest species, and they celebrate man's technological skill, especially his ability to dominate the environment.

If the environmentalists have taught us anything, it is that this pattern of domination is a disaster for the human species. What we have called progress is not progress at all; it is instead the pathway to calamity for the entire planet. What feminists and gay people can teach the environmentalists is this: failure to respect and love Nature's creation is one more game in the fine tradition of rape and queer-bashing. It is not an accident that writers have referred to the "rape of the environment" or the "ravishing of the wilderness" — the connection is that obvious!

That connection must be made more explicit than it has been if the environmental movement is to have long-range success. This is the special contribution of women and gay people to the "no nukes" movement.

When we marched in gay contingents in anti-war demonstrations a few years ago, we tried to be more than "gays against the war." For example, gay liberationists issued a position paper entitled "Sexism and the War." It said, in part: "Wars are conceived and fought by men who are reared to play a 'macho' role and to feel guilty if this sexual role is not fulfilled . . . Human interaction based on sexual roles conditions boys to be aggressive and to fight others, while it condi-

tions females to submit to a lesser status in the hierarchy. This same system brands those outside these two stereotypes as 'queer' and 'foreign'." Gay and feminist writings already offer us related analysis concerning the relationship between sexism and the politics of ecology, but we have not really done much so far to connect these issues in a strong and vocal manner.

One reason for this failure, perhaps, is the fact that the gay community, such as it exists, is primarily urban-based, and city people are generally less aware of the harmonious patterns of nature. Those of us gay people who do live in the



country are a very small minority among conscious up-front gays. Most rural gays, because of the oppressive family-oriented nature of rural society, remain in the closet. A gay person from a traditional urban family community like Dorchester or Charlestown, say, at least has a chance to relate to the open gay community of Boston's center city. But a gay person from a small town in central or western Massachusetts has no such alternative. Although many city gays have small-town or rural pasts, these pasts are quickly and sometimes happily forgotten as a strong gay identity is forged. The beauty and wonders of the cycles of nature that formed a backdrop for the youth of such gay people were taken for granted then and are generally not something that holds importance once such people are integrated into the pace and style of urban living.

The cycles of nature are a very beautiful thing, and those of us who live in the northeast have the special beauty of our temperate climate with its four distinct seasons. Many gay people love the ocean, and several of New England's most strikingly beautiful beaches, including Ogunquit, Truro and Provincetown, are popular among gay people. Surely, oil politics and energy policies should be of concern to those of us who love the beaches. If every gay person who has enjoyed the white sand of New England's beaches were to write to their state representatives and urge them to look to alternative sources of energy rather than oil and nuclear power, it would be a powerful chorus of voices. And for what better reason than the beauty we see or the sensual pleasures we associate with a beach in summertime?!

The connection between my gayness and my ecological consciousness is something that is very real to me. I feel a special bond with other gay people who make the same connection. I hope there will be many of us, rural and urban gay people, to join together to work for a world in which human beings live in harmony with Nature. Combatting the utility companies' plans for nuclear power in the coming years will be one of the most urgent and dramatic issues for us. (I happen to believe that water use and conservation is another crucial issue.) Anyone who is interested in preparing a gay-feminist position paper and joining a gay contingent on the next "no nukes" rally in Seabrook, which will probably be held in the spring, please drop me a line (Allen Young, Butterworth Farm, RFD 2, Orange, MA 01364). I will volunteer to send out a "contact sheet" with all the names and addresses to all who answer.

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NEED OF THE WEEK

The Boston Gay Hotline needs volunteers to help staff our phones. Any gay person interested in becoming a phone counsellor may apply by calling the Hotline at 426-9371; best

times are between 6 and 9 p.m., Mon.-Fri. Interviews will be held no later than a week after your call. Training will start Sunday, Feb. 6.



contact

By Dai Thompson

NEW HAVEN, CT — The smoke is finally beginning to clear up around Hendrie Hall, Yale University, but a clear view is still not possible. The fire which damaged a fraternity office as well as the Gay Alliance/Yalesbian office definitely began in the fraternity office, according to Yale Fire Marshall Edmund Sterniak. Sterniak says the blaze was later carried to the G.A.Y. office through a glass wire transom. The specific cause of the fire has yet to be determined and will not be until all members of the fraternity have been questioned as to their whereabouts at the time. Their office, unlike the previously broken-into G.A.Y. office, was tightly secured and had to be broken in to by the fire fighters.

Because of the still-murky specifics surrounding the fire, members of G.A.Y. are not yet able to relax their suspicions.

Did someone miss, and set fire to the

wrong office? Was the fire in the fraternity office an attempt to cover up an arsonist's real target? Or was some member of the fraternity perhaps just plain careless with a lighted match? Until these and all other similar questions are firmly answered, no one at G.A.Y. seems ready to breathe a final sigh of relief — especially because no alternate space has yet been given to the group and no Yale official seems even interested in attempting to find such space.

Besides the fire, the other main topic

Anita Bryant

(Continued from page 3)

moral atmosphere in which my children grow up in," she told last week's hearing at the Miami Metro Commission at which a gay rights bill — the first in the Southland — was passed by a 5-3 vote. Bryant immediately announced that she was leading a coalition of religious fundamentalists to attempt to collect the 10,000 signatures necessary to bring about a referendum on the issue.

Christianity has been almost as important as orange juice in Bryant's impressive survival of the Nixon/Ford years. She is Vice-President (her husband Bob Green is President) of the Fishers of Men Opportunities, Inc., an agency that books "Christian talent." Such "Christian talent" has included

of conversation lately has been the Connecticut Gay Task Force's upcoming Event, now entitled Gay Rights Day, which will include a lobbying workshop, talks by Jean O'Leary of the National Gay Task Force and Ray Hopkins of GCN, a dinner, live entertainment by local musicians and a dance — all to be held on Sunday, Jan. 30, at Partners Cafe.

Other recent C.G.T.F. projects have included seeking legislators to sponsor the Sexual Orientation bill; various speaking engagements, including inter-

views on WPLR and WFIF; designing a C.G.T.F. button and a brochure advising members and friends "how to help" by writing the Governor as well as their individual legislators; asking other state and local organizations to support the bill and to write the Governor expressing their support and their hopes for its passage. For further information, write the Conn. Gay Task Force at P.O. Box 514, Hartford, CT 06101 or call the Gay Switchboard at 203-522-5575.

and fortune. "Most people think of me as that odd-ball lady who squeezes oranges when she isn't praying to Jesus, but I've known many depressions and doubts, and have even been tempted to sever with God."

Bryant's Christianity and her belief in the family appear to be the principal factors in her recent involvement in anti-gay activities. Her husband notes that "On our wedding night, Anita offered me the plan for salvation." But at least at this point, Anita's plan for salvation does not seem to include Miami's large and powerful gay community.

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Text of Susan Saxe's Statement After Her Sentencing, January 17

(This is the partial text of a statement issued by Susan Saxe for publication in the alternative press.)

To My Friends,

In my statements to the straight press about why I pled guilty to the charges in Boston, I said that I did it for one reason only — that it was the course of action that would get me out of jail soonest. This is true, but I feel I owe some further explanation to the people who supported me and who share my struggle.

OF PRIMARY IMPORTANCE IS THIS POINT: THIS WAS NOT A "DEAL." I DID NOT GIVE THE STATE ANYTHING FOR THE "REDUCED SENTENCE" EXCEPT MY OWN GUILTY PLEA. I REMAIN ABSOLUTELY FIRM IN MY STAND OF NON-COLLABORATION. I WILL NEVER TESTIFY AGAINST ANYONE FOR ANY REASON OR GIVE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT THE EVENTS OF 1970 OR ABOUT ANYONE I MAY HAVE KNOWN DURING THE TIME I WAS UNDERGROUND. FURTHERMORE, I WILL NEVER ABANDON MY POLITICAL COMMITMENTS IN RETURN FOR FAVORS FROM THE STATE. I DO NOT RECOGNIZE THE RIGHT OF THE STATE TO A SINGLE DAY OF MY LIFE, BUT I DO RECOGNIZE ITS POWER TO TAKE THAT AND MORE. THIS GUILTY PLEA WAS A TACTICAL DECISION BASED ON THAT REALITY.

- We who define ourselves politically, whether as feminists or radicals (or any of the labels attached to those politics) are responsible not only for the personal consequences of our acts but for the political consequences. We are and should be accountable to one another. Therefore, I'd like to explain step by step, to you, the process that led me to this difficult choice.

First of all, I should start by explaining that in 1970 I did commit illegal armed actions aimed against property and wealth. These actions came from a sense of outrage against the injustices of sexism, racism and imperialism, and particularly the immediate and pressing crisis of the Vietnam War. Without getting into a complex discussion of the theoretical and tactical pros and cons of armed struggle, I can still say that the politics that led me to those actions have not faded but ripened into a deeper commitment and understanding.

I do not believe that the same criminals who perpetuate and profit from war, repression and exploitation have the right to judge and punish those who resist. That is the fundamental principle upon which I hope anyone's

support for me is based. I have never attempted to gain support in the movement or elsewhere on any other claim.

In deciding to take their final offer, I weighed the 12-14 year state sentence against the substantial risk of coming out of a second trial with multiple life sentences. Armed robbery alone carries a life sentence (which I would certainly get from the judge selected for my second trial) and felony murder carries a mandatory "natural life" sentence, which means you never become eligible for parole. I decided that even if there were another hung jury, I would still have 10 years to do on my federal sentence. The risk, in my opinion and in the opinion of almost everyone I consulted, far outweighed the relatively small amount of additional time.

Equally important to me was the political consideration. I do not intend to defend this choice as politically pure or exemplary. It was, I believe, the best of two bad alternatives. If I had gone through with another trial I would probably have been convicted. If not, then at the third trial or the fourth . . . all at great cost in time, energy and money. Once convicted and sentenced, I would have two legal alternatives. Either I could assume I would never get out and plan a life around total resistance inside the walls. This was the course taken by Stanley Bond (one of my codefendants), who was murdered by the government while imprisoned in Walpole in 1972. The other alternative would be to attempt to reduce the sentence through a protracted campaign in the courts, parole and commutation boards, and other legal and political channels . . . in other words, by appealing to the mercy and decency of the system. I find this as politically distasteful and counter-productive as I find the other alternative personally distressing.

By pleading guilty I have given the state another 18 months of my life (the difference between my federal and state parole board eligibility dates), possibly more. But at least I have put an upper limit on the time they can get from me. Yes, I'm giving them something they have no right to take. In a sense it's like paying blackmail — giving them part of my life to keep them from taking the rest.

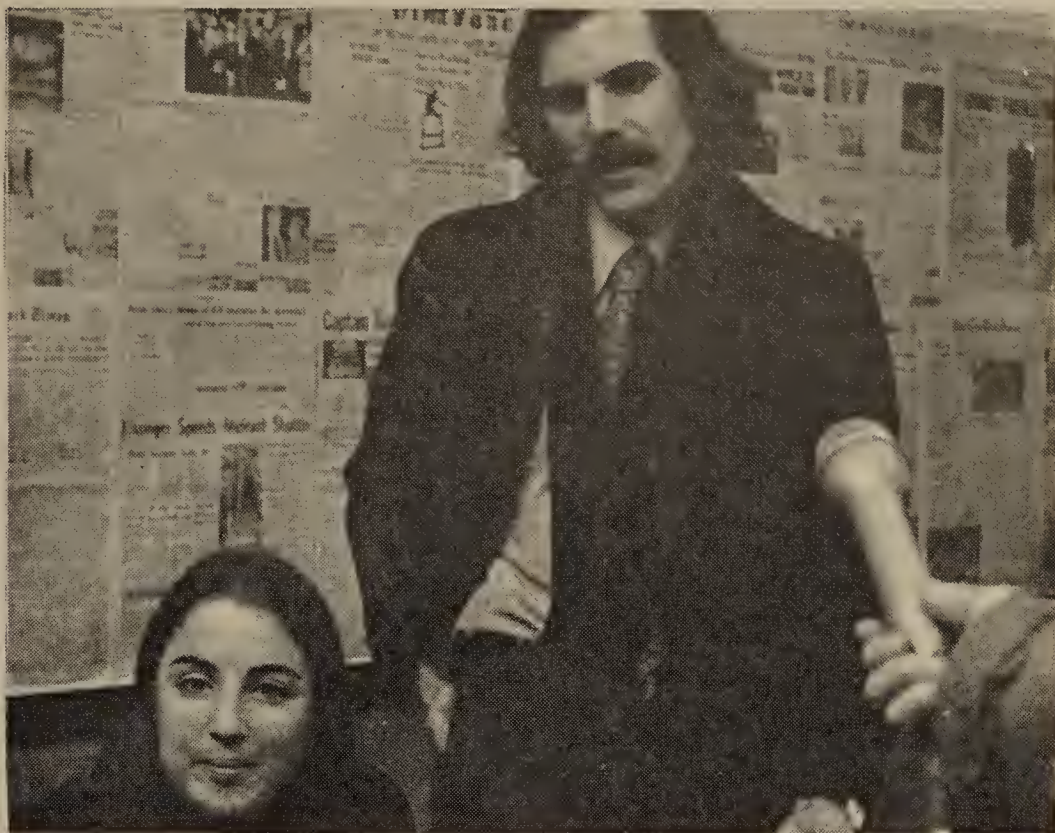
On the other hand, it's a small victory that even this was possible. Without the energy, love and support of so many people, I would have been railroaded into the maximum sentence in the first trial. If the movement were in a more advanced stage, perhaps we would have been able to push even further. Under different circumstances perhaps no compromise would

have been possible or necessary. But for now, at this point in our development, we have done what we could. We fought the state to a standstill, which is a partial victory. We have won back from them the greater part of one

woman's life. I want to affirm once again that it is and will continue to be a life dedicated to struggle.

Thank you.

Susan Saxe



Susan Saxe's lawyers Nancy Gertner (left) and Tom Shapiro (right) speak at a news conference at the Suffolk County Courthouse after Saxe was sentenced.

Saxe Pleads Guilty

(Continued from page 1)

in the decision to plead guilty. Roy has a reputation for being a tough-on-the-defense judge as well as a harsh sentencer.

Why did District Attorney Gaffney agree to the plea? In court he stressed the amount of time and money already spent on the case and the additional cost of a second trial. He said the plea would put to rest a whole slew of litigation still up in the air and asserted that although he felt he "could get a conviction from the second trial, justice will be served by Susan Saxe receiving 12-14 years."

Members of the Susan Saxe defense committee believe that the public support that developed for Susan is what finally made it possible for her to be facing less than life imprisonment. In their statement the Defense Committee explained: "When Susan was arrested almost two years ago we knew that she would never be freed by the courts. And now we can see the day when Susan will be out on the streets again. This is a direct result of the work people throughout the country have done. The fact that our efforts have substantially reduced the amount of time Susan will spend in jail reflects the pressure we as a movement have exerted."

"Victory for the Defense"

Responding to a reporter's question

as to whether or not this was a victory for the prosecution, a puzzled but smiling Nancy Gertner replied, "How can it be a victory for the prosecution when it is so clearly a victory for the defense? The prosecution started off charging Susan Saxe with first degree murder, proclaiming an open-and-shut case, and wanting to put her away for life. They couldn't get that."

"Sure it's a victory," said a smiling Terri Turgeon who had come up from Connecticut for the hearing. Jill Raymond, who had also come in from out of town to show her support for Saxe put it this way, "It's clearly a capitulation by the state and a victory for us that Saxe will be out on the streets. They were not able to lock her up for the rest of her life, which is what they really wanted to do." Both Turgeon and Raymond had spent time in jail themselves for refusing to testify before grand juries looking into the whereabouts of Susan Saxe and Kathy Power, and gathering information on the women's and gay communities.

Susan Saxe is presently in Framingham, waiting to be taken to Philadelphia for sentencing there. Though sentenced to do her time in Framingham it is still possible that prison officials will decide to send her to federal prison at Alderson, West Virginia.

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On Saturday, February 5th, after the performance of Noel Coward's *Hay Fever*, there will be a party to celebrate TOSOS's fourth anniversary — and the closing of the theater. Like many other gay movement institutions which have something genuine to offer, TOSOS is out of money.

Although TOSOS has announced its closing, there is yet a slender possibility that it may survive if it succeeds in raising \$5000 by the end of the *Hay Fever* run. You are all invited to the party on the 6th of February — BYOB and some sympathetic change.

The following interview was done a while ago when the future of TOSOS seemed brighter. Yet Wilson addresses himself to the kinds of problems that plague all gay enterprises.

By Don Shewey

A good deal of the gay theatre in New York City is produced under the auspices of two Off-Off-Broadway figures — Doric Wilson, artistic director of The Other Side of Silence (TOSOS), 257 Church St., and John Glines, director of The Glines Theatre, 260 W. Broadway. To discover something about the past, present, and future of gay theatre, GCN recently interviewed both men — what emerged was an unadorned look at the personalities behind gay theatre. Mr. Wilson is profiled below; the interview with Mr. Glines will be featured in an upcoming issue of GCN. Neither would discuss the other on the record.

TOSOS, Inc., is a non-profit workshop of the performing and visual arts committed to an open and honest exploration of the many expressions of the gay life style; the purpose of TOSOS is a pursuit of self-identity and respect, and a broadening of gay and straight attitudes through the creative process. TOSOS began Feb. 6, 1974; it is dedicated to Joe Cino.

Since his play *And He Made a Her* opened at the Caffé Cino in 1960, Wilson has been a well-known playwright and director in the Off-Off-Broadway (OOB) community. As a person, Wilson is not "sort of" anything — he is extremely intelligent, well-read, opinionated, headstrong, garrulous, and energetic. And even though I got him out of bed at the ungodly hour of 12 noon, he managed to speak vigorously and with great interest on a variety of topics from Shaw to lesbian separatism. What follows is a severely truncated sample of the conversation.

DW: We haven't been able to find many new scripts. We either get scripts that are "Boys in the Band Meets Tubstrip and Goes to the Caribbean on a Vacation," or not very well-written heavy dramas. For the theatre to survive as a gay theatre — we have the audience, we have the actor support, we have the support of the OOB community, but we do not have the scripts, which puts us in the situation of looking at what there is to revive, but there isn't really very much, and we've hit most of them. The next line down is to do gay playwrights even if the play isn't gay, and ultimately we may have to do just straight plays if nothing else is available. Even if for the next three years we only did things like Shaw's *Man and Superman*, we would still do it as gay theatre — there's no reason why a gay theatre has to do only gay plays...

It's a lot of hard work putting on our productions, they cost a lot of money which we don't have; we're broke like all of OOB, and we're doubly broke because we're gay. There are a lot of people that fund OOB on small levels, a lot of whom are gay, who are not going to have their names involved with a gay organization. And though I object to that, I can certainly see where it comes from.

You see, we've got a long way to go. When you say gay theatre, the first word that goes down is "gay"; if you said black theatre, the first word would be "theatre," defined by "black." For instance, we run into an irony down at

the theatre — we're dealing with mainly actors who have some professional background who use showcase theatres either to work and keep busy or to showcase themselves for their professional careers. And now, once we've established our theatre as legit, most of the actors who come in and try out for gay parts are straight actors. Their gay equivalent is petrified of what happens to you usually in the business when you do a gay role and you're not straight. The irony of that is that the agents and the producers are almost exclusively gay in this city. Their own self-hatred, for want of a better term, makes them dismiss their gay brothers...

As far as I'm concerned the only real oppression — and I'm not dismissing the laws and the states and the small towns and the kind of oppression that gays have been through — but to me the real, most viable oppression that gays go through is the oppression of other gays. For instance, we had no trouble trying to find a straight funnel organization, but none of the gay organizations that had tax-exemptions was willing to funnel to us — that sort of resentment, the sexual politics that come up. I've always thought, and it's always been my experience, that if your first response to yourself is a negative response, "oh-oh, the world is straight and I am gay," that somehow subtly you carry along that essential negativism in everything you do. I think it's changing, it will change. The reason that TOSOS and all the other gay organizations exist is to come to some sort of solution of this.

To go back to what we were saying about theatre — most of Broadway is gay-produced, gay theatre. Take *Chorus Line* — that's basically the work of a number of gay people. Those same gay people, if you say gay theatre to them, immediately it means second-rate, because somehow gay is second-rate. When I first started this theatre, the first response from many people was, "Gay has nothing to do with my art, gay is what I do when I go to bed." This is exactly what I mean — and I'm not dismissing sex at all, I like it a great deal, I'm very promiscuous — but as long as we define ourselves only sexually, then we are also going to have a slight puritanism about sex and so a slight dismissal of any public statement of our gayness.

GCN: How did you actually start TOSOS?

DW: I was always in OOB, and I was always planning someday to start my own theatre. I got into the bar business, as a bartender, to get the money to support a theatre. When Stonewall happened, I was helping to start the Circle Repertory Theatre, which is probably the most important theatre in NYC at the moment. There were a lot of gays up at Circle, and finally, there was a viable, visible gay movement starting, and I got involved in it. I would run back and forth from the Circle to GLF and then GAA, and I began to realize I didn't like the schizophrenia that was going down. No, we didn't like *Boys in the Band*, but on the other hand those of us who were creative did not like the idea of censorship, particularly in a society that is as essentially free as this one. The more I thought about the problem of *Boys in the Band*, the more I

DORIC WILSON-

wondered, "Why aren't gays who are creative making some gay statement?" I thought that there should be a place that authors and artists who want to deal with their gayness can have it done, and done well, and done away from the marketplace where sensationalism is the rule of the day.

You know, Broadway has done plenty of gay plays, not one of which in the last couple of seasons I would do at my theatre. I don't consider them that healthy. Like *Find Your Way Home* — I have no intention of doing that at TOSOS. *Staircase*, a very good play. Maybe sometime, when there's a library of good gay work, you can go back and do *Staircase* or *Find Your Way Home* objectively, and then it's not going to hurt so much.

GCN: Because presumably better statements would have been made.

DW: Yeah, I mean, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* is a very valid statement. But if that was the only play about heterosexuality, then you'd have a right to cry foul.

GCN: So you and Peter del Valle basically started TOSOS?

DW: Yeah, Peter's contribution was basically writing *Lovers*, which was a big hit, which helped us in one way and hurt us in another. Musical comedies draw a large audience, but they are audiences for musical comedy only, and very little of what went into *Lovers* came back to us; in fact it made us some enemies. A lot of serious theatre people considered *Lovers* trite and silly. I mean, I'm still trying to get Martin Duberman to let us do a play because he hated *Lovers*, and he's never seen anything else that we've done. Yet he's yelling about how nobody does his plays, and there's a play of his we want to do this season. In fact, someone recently was doing an article on gay theater for *Christopher Street* and was interviewing me, and in

the middle of the interview they said, "Do you know that Martin Duberman says that you're not a 'gay theatre?'" (Laughs) And I said, "Oh?"

GCN: Why did he say that?

DW: I asked exactly the same question. And I felt like writing Marty a letter saying, "We may not be your kind of gay theatre, but like it or not we are a gay theatre."

But it seems as we get older, we are treated better and better by our peers. We are one of 200 OOB theatres, and last year we were only in our third year, but when all the OOB theatres were meeting with Equity, to try to create a new code, there was a panel of seven, and I was chosen to be on that committee representing all the big-gun theatres, and little TOSOS like a row-boat coming behind. It was a real sign of respect. But you see, OOB is alternative theatre, its own version of the gay movement, as a protest against commercial theatre. A lot of us didn't even admit it at the time. But it is an alternative theatre, and its views on this are much more radical than the commercial theatre.

GCN: How does that go together with your feelings that gays oppress other gays?

DW: No, I'm not talking about alternative people, I'm talking about the agents and producers who run theatre itself in terms of gays oppressing gays. It's the straights in OOB that deal with TOSOS. The gays I know in the upper strata of OOB have to treat us with respect because we've done very well, but it's always a slight joke and a slight dismissal because we're a gay theatre.

I think what I mean when I say that gays oppress gays — I don't like slogans, and that's one of my own, and it's just as bankrupt as all the others — what I mean is our own self-hate, suspicion, our own tendency to deal



photo by Avery Willard

Doric Wilson, artistic director and founder of TOSOS

Jeffrey W

the energy behind TOSOS, gay theatre in New York

with people from a purely sexual point of view — “you interest me because I’m also slightly turned on to you”/ “you don’t interest me because I’m not turned on to you.” Or the reverse of that — “Oh-oh, are you turned on to me? Therefore I’m going to be defensive.” Until that’s cleared out, we’re never going to be able to fight the real battle, which will be straight oppression.

I thought I knew a lot when I went in, but now I have no idea what gay theatre is, what it will be, if it will be. I’m not sure this will be anything but a genre-type place like murder-mystery plays or Jewish commercial comedies for Broadway. In other words, you can run a repertory theatre if you have 500 years of culture and history to draw from that’s straight. We don’t have 500 years of culture that is gay, and maybe what we’re trying to do won’t exist really for another 500 years.

GCN: Do you have any idea what the ideal gay play would be?

DW: It’s up to the writer what that is.

GCN: Do you have any guidelines for it?

DW: Yes. I would like to have a gay Shakespeare, a gay Chekhov, a gay Brecht, a gay Beckett, a gay Ionesco — and I could go down the list, have them write me their gay experience to the best of their writing ability and let me do it.

GCN: What would the plays be like?

DW: I have no idea. Shakespeare’s would have a lot of action, and Beckett’s wouldn’t. (Laughs) What can I say? We’re not talking about formula. I would love, for instance, to have a Russian writer write me a play about what it’s like to be gay in Russia right now in the Chekhov style. England has — it makes me jealous — an awful lot of interesting plays, it’s been dealt with better. That’s one

reason to them *Staircase* isn’t such a shitty thing because they have an awful lot of gay theatre. Every time we turn around, we find an English script. Our second play this season was very gay, Christopher Hampton’s *When Did You Last See My Mother*. And take Joe Orton. *What the Butler Saw* is the first play we’ve done so far that has absolutely no gay characters. Yet in a very funny way it’s one of the gayest things we’ve done. The consciousness behind the writing is very homosexual, and I don’t mean because it’s witty; Dryden was witty and he was not gay. I get so bored with, “Oh well, it’s gay because it’s funny.” I’ve never accepted that. But some people were furious at us for doing it, they said it wasn’t gay.

GCN: Who picks the plays you do?

DW: I do.

GCN: What considerations do you use — commercial, balance of season?

DW: Well, at this point we don’t have enough to choose from for me to have the luxury of making that kind of decision. If we had 500 scripts, 40 of which I wanted to do, then things like balance of the season, production problems, would enter into the choice. Production problems do get involved now with dismissals, if there are things that just can’t be done off-Broadway...

We’ve only turned down two scripts. Oh yes, and one lesbian script, and this is a particular subject I’d just as soon we didn’t get into. We rather naively thought that we could be very open but the more I realize it, I think that inevitably we’re going to be slightly male-oriented. The best way I can explain this without getting into male-female trips is that the same phenomenon would happen — look, the Puerto Ricans in the city live in almost the same conditions as the blacks in this city, but a black theatre is

not really going to express Puerto Rican problems, or the other way around, and they will have to be separate for reasons of language, if for nothing else. Well, in a funny way, that’s what happens at TOSOS. For reasons of language, yes, we can do a lesbian play; it would be token. And we will go on doing them...

I think your noticing that there is no specific answer to any of the questions you’re asking me, and that’s one of our biggest problems in that everybody down there wants a very specific theatre. They want a show-biz theatre, they want a male theatre, a male & female theatre, a drag theatre, and from their point of view they’re right. But when I operate as artistic director, I look at a play we’re going to do down there, I look at it in two ways. First, is this going to be an affirmative experience for the community that we’re presenting it to? (Not to the point of being Pollyanna, because we’re not going to do Pollyanna.) The second thing is, since I am a writer, I am very concerned that it be good literary theatre.

GCN: From the time you started TOSOS to now, what lessons have you learned about your original ideals?

DW: Well, I think the main lesson I’ve learned is that there has got to be, to go back to my original statement, that what we’re trying to do will never be done until there are writers — gay or straight — willing to write well on the subject, not only on the subject itself, but to include gays as viable characters in whatever they’re writing. Because we’re stymied until that happens. Until I start getting 10 or 12 plays on the level of *The Haunted Host* or *When Did You Last See My Mother*, we are going to be a rather impoverished gay theatre.

GCN: What is the difference between TOSOS and the Glines Theatre?

DW: Turn that off. (Mysterious 18-minute gap in the tape.) The Glines itself is of value to the gay theatre, to keep it going. He’s not going to compete with us, because he doesn’t like the kind of plays we’ve done. And there should be 10 or 15 gay theatres — that’s not going to hurt...

GCN: How about competing for scripts?

GW: Well, that’s going to happen.

GCN: Do you get a sense of the media attitude toward TOSOS or gay theatres in general? Is there more or less attention?

DW: There’s none. But that’s the problem in NYC; OOB only gets so many inches anyway in the media, and those inches have to be spread over a number of theatres, and they are spread primarily to new material. The more new plays we do, the more chance we’re going to get straight media. But generally the straight media has dismissed our concept of gay theatre. The *Voice*, everytime they review us, they spend half the time discussing their view on gayness, you know...

OOB audiences are mostly by word-of-mouth, and the media don’t have much effect. But there is one liberation that I truly believe in and that is, quote unquote, the liberation of the arts, the right of the artist to make a statement, and for that statement to be judged from the artist’s point of view... I do not like reviews that approach things from a political point of view — don’t review them! That’s the political stance, as far as I’m concerned. If they feel they are only interested in those things that are socially responsible, then let them concentrate on those and ignore the rest.

It really pisses me — there were a number of plays done OOB last year that had either direct or indirect gay visibility, *Titanic*, *The Caretaker*,

probably more. The straight press ignores it because they don’t have the space. The gay press is filled with critics who do not get much money, who may possibly get press passes to see Broadway shows on the third night or whatever, and spend most of their time giving us reviews of *Chorus Line* or whatever with no responsibility to their gay community, so the plays went by. We get a lot of the gay press, they cover us thoroughly, certainly that is available in NYC. We don’t with the *Advocate* — we’ve had a fight with them for about a year and a half, so they haven’t reviewed us. But there is an area for good specialized gay criticism in this city if there was an outlet for it.

But it would mean that someone would really have to be into OOB and have some background in it. People who come down to review us and claim to be intelligent do not know Robert Patrick’s plays or realize that Lanford Wilson is one of the most out-front gay writers who’s ever written. In every one of his plays where it’s possible, there’s a gay character visible. But most of the critics who review gay theatre are unaware of what little is there...

I have a funny feeling that no gay theatre is ever going to be deadly serious. I’ve never thought this through, and I’m trying something out that I have no defense for, but I have an instinct that treating things so seriously is essentially born out of heterosexual phenomena, and has to do with the kind of lives that have to be created if you’re going to have a society built on the nuclear family living in a social structure which includes poverty and other things. Then any friction that those things cause going to be treated very, very dramatically by the people involved. And in fact gays, from their freedom of choice — if you have a lover today, maybe tomorrow you won’t want to have a lover, and it’s up to you and your lover to decide what kind of a relationship you’re going to develop, what kind of sex act you will have, or whatever — that freedom of choice, independence, gives gays the right of a sense of objectivity. Gays are not so subject to the culture. We are bothered by the culture, we hide from the culture, we sometimes have to become invisible to that culture, but when we get away to the parts of the world we take over for ourselves, we have a freedom which allows us to have an objectivity, which allows us to have a sense of humor.

That’s why Lanford Wilson’s plays, no matter how heterosexual they get, always have a warm, cheerful sense of humor. I would hate it if gays ever, ever, ever become integrated into society, just like I think blacks and a number of other people would be wise not to be integrated into heterosexual society. They must get their rights and their equal opportunity but work very, very hard to protect their cultural identity.

But going back to this humor thing, I think subjectivity in the arts is essentially a heterosexual phenomenon, even when it’s done by a homosexual such as Tennessee Williams, and that the artist, even if he’s not gay, who draws back from the society, is not part of the society, has an objective and a comic affirmative, because he has to develop a sense of humor.

That’s why Shakespeare is neither gay nor straight — the objectivity that goes down in Shakespeare is that of a man not trapped in society, who left and got away from the nuclear family.

I don’t know what all that has to do with — I guess it does have to do with gay theatre. What the perfect gay play is, it’s a very objective play, a play that does not take for granted sexual roles or society roles, and therefore is ironic, if not comic. Almost has to be.



Davies as the Lord Chancellor in TOSOS production of Gilbert and Sullivan’s “Iolanthe.”

photo by TOSOS



THE MARQUISE OF O. With Edith Clever, Bruno Ganz and Peter Luhr. Written and directed by Eric Rohmer. Adapted from the story by Heinrich von Kleist.

By Thom Willenbecher

Period piece films are seldom convincing. Often they tend to be too faithful to the period — the costumes, the dialogue, the setting, even the values, with the result that the film becomes either an exercise in elegance without underlying substance or a misguided homage to ideals that no longer make sense. Other times they betray a too-concerted effort on the part of writers and directors to read a contemporary meaning or "relevance" into a past that is better left as is, resulting in a modern allegory in a quaint and curious drag. Rare indeed is the film that manages to bridge the gap between historical authenticity and the values and sensibilities of this celluloid age. I can think of only two examples offhand, Robert Bresson's *Lancelot du Lac* and Eric Rohmer's *Marquise of O*.

The Marquise of O, faithful adaptation of a story by the German novelist-playwright Heinrich von Kleist, is set in Italy in 1799, when the Russians invaded to assist Austria in its struggle against the Napoleonic forces. The Marquise of O (Edith Clever), a young, widowed peeress who lives with her parents in a small town of Northern Italy, is waylaid and almost raped one night in her garden by Russian troops. She is saved in the nick of time by a gallant, spectrally-handsome Count

film

Marquise of O — feminist in another age



Bruno Ganz in the "Marquise of O" at the Back Bay Screening Room starting Jan. 25 in Boston.

(Bruno Ganz) who later returns to propose marriage. She refuses to decide then and there, so the Count is sequestered in the town while she thinks it over. As he gives up and leaves, Julietta, the Marquise,

discovers she has become mysteriously impregnated, a discovery which is all the more appalling since she remembers never having compromised her virtue. Her parents treat her as a fallen woman, suspect her of deceiving them, and dismiss her from their house in disgrace. In order to save herself, she advertises for the unknown father, agreeing to accept his hand in marriage.

What is most remarkable about the film, and what makes the outmoded values of its time credible to us, is the fact that the drama is presented from the viewpoint of the Marquise. We see how the values of the time — chastity as an ideal, unwed pregnancy as a disgrace — are enforced by men although they cause the suffering of women. The viewer is quietly persuaded to identify with the heroine,

with her shock at discovering she is pregnant, with her anguish in the face of exile, with her internal dilemma at deciding whether, as society mandates, to marry the man who took advantage of her, with her resourcefulness in resolving that dilemma. In contrast with her resourcefulness, the men around her who enforce the double standard and who presumably profit by it, are shown to be weak and indecisive figures. A particularly significant

figure in the film is the aging midwife, brilliantly portrayed by Ruth Drexel, who leads the Marquise to accept her condition and to squirm free of the limits the men around her have imposed. All in all, the *Marquise of O* imparts a subtle but thoroughgoing feminism, both in its mode of presentation and in its intellectual content.

Stylistically, the film has its strong points as well as its weak points. Perhaps the strongest point is its painterly cinematography. Rohmer once said that, like painting, "Cinema is an art of plastic expression by plastic forms . . . a search for pictorial form." Much attention is paid throughout to decor, to matters of lighting, arrangement, scale, to matching the visual imagery to the moods and predicaments of the characters. There are many art allusions as well — to the princely figures of Gainsborough, the odalisques of Ingres and the angular drawing rooms of Vermeer. But there are problems as well. One knows the outcome before the film is half over, after which the film just seems to drag. The tears and anguish of the heroine are a bit heavy at times, and at times one wishes that the editor's scissors were more liberally employed, especially when the Marquise begs at her father's knees. Still, we are left with a warm and womanly film, one which is highly political in its own stately way.

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Can Lesbians Be Friends?

By Margy

Sometimes I wondered if friendships weren't easier to come by when lesbians were into roles. Even though it was always possible that a woman would change her identity from butch to femme, or vice versa, I imagine there was at least a semblance of non-sexual relationships. That is, the butches could be friends with each other without the constant concern about getting involved with each other, with the same being true of the femmes. Furthermore, a butch did not have to be too jealous if her lover was spending time with another femme. Of course, there are a multitude of additional problems that are a result of role-playing, but perhaps one of the reasons role-playing exists among lesbians is the need these women feel to have other lesbians they can relate to on a friendship level and feel safe with. Also the existence of acknowledged roles may allow for an added bit of order to the lesbian community.

If the lesbian community lacks anything it's order. The simple fact that all other lesbians are potential lovers can result in many complex situations. If a group of lesbians have been close for any length of time, many of them might very likely have been lovers with each other. There've been several times when I've been involved with or close to women who were once lovers with someone whom I'd also been involved with. When a group of friends get together the underlying currents of past love, pain, and jealousy can be incredible.

In addition to the general complexity of lesbian communities, and the ever-present question of sexual involvement, there exists a whole other set of barriers to friendship when one or both of the individuals already has a lover. For example, one of the first lesbian communities I got to know consisted of about ten women, most of whom were in couples with each other. I was single at the time, and I felt as if I almost had to go through a probationary period before most of the women would open up to me. In a sense I had to show that I could be trusted, and that I wasn't interested in breaking up any of the couples. This experience made me realize the overwhelming restraints placed on lesbian friendships.

Say I'm friends with a woman named Barb, and she's in a couple with Joan. First of all, I'll have to accept the fact that Barb's number one priority will most likely be maintaining her relationship with Joan. Simple time commitments may make it hard for me to spend much time with Barb, especially time alone. If Joan doesn't like and trust me, it will probably be hard for Barb and me to get very close. Or, if she's jealous and possessive whether or not she likes me may be irrelevant, for it'll likely be difficult for anyone to get to know Barb. If Joan doesn't value friendship then she'll have trouble accepting any of Barb's friends. Furthermore, Joan may not understand how Barb can talk for hours with someone else when she doesn't seem to talk much at all at home. The fact that different women bring out different aspects of Barb's personality may simply be too threatening to Joan. (It seems sad to me that women feel jealous because of their fear of losing their lovers, and that often this very jealousy causes the women to break up.)

In my getting to know Barb it is important for me to respect Barb's

relationship with Joan. I must accept the fact that Barb and I won't become lovers, and not approach the friendship with the underlying hope that we'll get involved. If I criticize Joan, or try to ignore her very existence as Barb's lover, the friendship will falter.

Since Joan is obviously a major factor in Barb's life, it would be almost imperative to the survival of our friendship that I like Joan. For, seeing Barb may often mean seeing Joan too. In addition, not only do I have to like both Barb and Joan, but also how they relate to each other as a couple. There've been times when I like two women individually, but can't stand the way they act when they're together.

While certain roadblocks have to be overcome when forming friendships with women in couples, being in a



couple, and attempting to make friends with others, also has its own special difficulties. From my present standpoint of being in a monogamous couple, I've discovered many problems in getting to know a woman, and I feel that these can contribute to the isolation of women in couples.

One annoying aspect of being in a couple is that frequently other lesbians view you only as a part of that couple. At times I feel as if my lover and I are thought of as extensions of each other, not as individuals with our own thoughts, feelings, and lives. Once past this obstacle you meet the more pervasive problem of not being considered a potential lover.

Occasionally my lover and I have been sought out by women for this very reason. They hardly know us, but they feel a need to talk to someone who's not directly affected by what they have to say. In other words, they find themselves in a situation where just about everyone they're close to they're also sexually involved with, or at least considering it. They may get to the point where they feel that they need someone totally outside of the situation to discuss it with; they need someone who's "safe," someone who's not trying to get involved with them.

However, a more common occurrence is being ignored. That is, many times at social events I begin to feel close to invisible. Often I've met women at parties, and when in the midst of a conversation they realize

I'm in a couple, they seem to quickly lose interest and begin looking around the room for someone else to talk with. After all, why waste your time with someone who's already "taken."

Once past these initial reactions, other ones seem to develop. Lots of people seem to get concerned if a woman in a couple starts spending a lot of time with someone other than her lover. Since it seems that whenever two lesbians are seen together for any length of time the community begins to assume that they are or soon will be lovers, it confuses people when one of the women is already in a couple.

Even if my lover's not upset about my seeing someone else, my lover's friends may be. They may tell her, directly or indirectly, that they think she's crazy for trusting me so much and not being jealous. She may either feel as if she has to try to reassure her friends that I'm not getting involved with the other woman, or she may start being affected by their feelings and also wonder if she's being a fool.

The other woman's friends may start questioning her too. They may tell her

Finally, there's always the possibility that one of the couples may break up, thus drastically changing the friendships.

I don't want to be totally negative about the chance for the development and survival of lesbian friendships. If two lesbians can make it past all the obstacles and restraints that I've discussed (and any others there may be), the friendship that grows between them can be a wonder. With good friends a woman who's single doesn't have to search for a lover to fulfill her needs for closeness, affection, and companionship. I still have strong feelings for the two women who were the first lesbians I became close friends with, having gotten past the initial fantasies of possible sexual involvement. At the time I was sexually involved with several women and my life seemed to consist of constant trauma, excitement, and emotional turmoil. The friendships I made with those two women made me aware that what I needed in my life was not more or different lovers, but simply good friends. Having friends to talk and laugh with, to hold, and hug, and sleep with (when I say sleep, that's exactly what I mean) finally, made me realize what I'd been missing as a single lesbian.

Ideally I dream of a group of lesbians in which jealousy, possessiveness and the constant and at times desperate search for a lover doesn't exist. I hope that someday lesbians will place more emphasis on friends, and we will allow ourselves and each other more freedom for closeness and affection without confusing it with sex, that single lesbians will feel less of a need or pressure to find a lover, and women living in couples won't be so cut off from other lesbians. Dancing with my friends, holding them, talking and laughing and arguing with them, playing with them, and sleeping with them — all these make up one of the most wonderful parts of my life. Even though I'm not sharing orgasms with these women, I somehow don't feel that our relationships are deprived.

When I read about women trying to form lesbian communities and organizations I wonder if we're jumping ahead of ourselves. Communities composed of lovers, ex-lovers, and acquaintances are missing a very critical and necessary element — friends. Lesbians have a wide spectrum of beliefs, lifestyles, and backgrounds, and we're often separated by race, class, age, etc. I feel that if we're ever going to attain any semblance of unity we must be able to at least get together as friends.

The lesbian groups that now exist often try to provide a variety of ways for lesbians to get to know each other, since for many lesbians the only alternative has been the bar. However, I'm afraid that until we change our basic attitudes about lovers and friends, until we remove some of the emphasis on sex and sexual involvements and thus also reduce the amount of jealousy and possessiveness, and until we validate the importance of non-sexual friendships, we'll still be developing the same relationships as always — we'll be following the same patterns whether we do it in rap groups, meetings, or coffeehouses. Loneliness and isolation are common problems in this society. I hope that somehow we as lesbians can find a way to combat them — and I don't think becoming lovers with lots of women is the answer. It seems to me that an army of lovers certainly can fail.

[reprinted from *Lesbian Connection*, P.O. Box 811, E. Lansing, Michigan 48823. *Lesbian Connection* is free to lesbians, but, like all publications, money is needed.]

Kirkwood's "Cat" Barely Purrs



Charles Stransky embraces Stephen Driscoll in a "love thy burglar" episode from "P.S. Your Cat is Dead."

By Don Shewey

I've been looking forward to the Boston Repertory Theatre's production of James Kirkwood's "P.S. Your Cat Is Dead" for several weeks, and I'd love to give it nothing less than a rave review. Well, it's not that simple — the play has a lot to recommend it, but I have serious reservations.

First, a brief review of the play's infamous history. "P.S. Your Cat Is Dead" first appeared as a novel and won a great deal of popular success. The story takes place on New Year's Eve, at the end of a truly horrendous day for Jimmy Zoole, a 38-year-old

second-rate actor. He's lost his job in a Broadway show, he has been written out of his long-running soap opera, his girlfriend is walking out on him, his rich Aunt Claire is trying to run his life, his apartment has been ripped off twice in as many months, and his cat went into the veterinary equivalent of an intensive care unit and never came back. So when Zoole returns to his apartment and catches a burglar in the act of ripping him off again, he finally has a target on which to take out the anger and frustration of the day's atrocities. He ties up Vito, the burglar, intending to torture him mercilessly, but what ensues is a funny, human interchange between two desperate creatures, each in need of an existential overhaul. And it turns out that Vito the burglar is a healthy, red-blooded bisexual.

When the play premiered on Broadway, a number of major critics, seemingly threatened by what they saw as a homosexual manifesto, slammed the play, and although it was doing good box office business, the producers got nervous and closed the play after only three weeks. Kirkwood was temporarily distressed, but determined to vindicate the reputation of his "love-child," he supervised highly-successful productions in Buffalo, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Another cloud was cast over the show when Sal Mineo was murdered while rehearsing in San Francisco for the part of Vito. Kirkwood had planned to co-star with Mineo in an Off-Broadway revival, which was subsequently cancelled.

While rehearsals were underway for the Boston Rep's production, Kirk-

wood appeared at a press conference to talk about himself, his career, and "Cat." He expressed scorn at New York's reaction but pointed out that it gave him a chance to work on the play, revising it with each successive production, until he arrived at a final script.

The play itself as it appears at the Boston Rep presents a tricky problem when comparing it to the novel; the book wins hands down, simply because it offers more depth to all of the characters. For instance, onstage what little you find out about Aunt Claire or Vito's deceased lover Ben is sandwiched in thin slices between fast-flying one-liners. Also, since most of Jimmy's troubles have occurred before the play starts, the anger that he takes out on Vito is diluted, almost irrational. Not that a lot of heavy exposition is needed; it's just that without that depth, the characters and the situation start to sound contrived.

The sexual tension between Jimmy and Vito that was strong in the book is toned down, and any talk about homosexuality is heavily loaded with jokes; it seems as if Kirkwood were nervous about the subject matter and figured no one would take offense if he kept him or her laughing.

The core of the play, the premise, abounds with comic possibilities, most of which are picked up on, and in the two key performances Stephan Driscoll as Vito and Gerald Stransky as Jimmy are exceptional. Stransky has that eager actor's nervous energy, always ready to lapse into a skit or an impression, and I don't think you could ask for a better Vito than Driscoll — he's funny and pathetic, charming and desperate, and his monologue about Ben's death is moving. I wish that the whole play focused exclusively on these two, because the exchange between the actors — the organic progression of

their relationship from animosity to something close to affection — is a joy to see.

A major flaw in the Rep's production is the direction of the three troublemakers who show up in the second act. Crazy Carmine, the ring-leader, is supposed to be a hypersexual being and a real threat to Jimmy. In the book these three were presented as heavy leather dudes with a masculine sexuality. But at the Rep, they were festooned as glitter queens — ones I suspect Jimmy would not be attracted to when exploring his own male preferences. They seemed more like comic relief — stereotypical, flaming faggots that straights could identify as such and laugh at.

Even though the production is flawed, and even if the script is no dramatic landmark, *P.S. Your Cat Is Dead* is something you'll want to see. With a gay character as natural and uncontaminated as Vito, I'd much rather see *P.S. Your Cat Is Dead* making the rounds at local theaters than *Norman... Is That You?*



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Poor Abe (Howard London) befuddled by life's incongruencies while Joan of Arc (Margo Skinner) turned house-maid simply opts out of the dilemma.

By David Holland

Now that "Norman" as in "Is That You?" has sneaked out of town, Kirkwood's "P.S. Your Cat Is Dead" has pussy-footed into the Boston Rep, but it won't curl up on my lap. I sat near the rear, using my knees as a chin-rest, not finding the humor that the straight audience discovered. Charles Stransky, direct from "The Misanthrope," tried desperately to create an otherwise depthless character. No luck. Stephan Driscoll,

as the panned, butcher-block-bound burglar, was successful in turning an obviously despised character into one with both charm and life. But regardless of a few "saving grace" performances, it's just another, "Oh Martha! A play with homosexuals" production! I wasn't particularly amused but the two septugenarians in front of me were all a-titter. Judge for yourself. It's playing at the Boston Rep for the next four weeks... And just around the block is this season's best production, Jules Feiffer's "Knock

Knock." This time the burden of responsibility is delightfully accorded Charles Cohen for importing the famed Trinity Square Rep to present this awesomely funny play. Nothing lacks at the Charles Playhouse, not the staging, the acting, nor the fun. If you have ever enjoyed Feiffer's searing comic strip you'll not be disappointed in the least with his play. "Knock Knock" is nothing short of the best this year... The Little Flags Theater's last production of "Tania" will serve as a benefit for Ella Ellison. The performance will be held Jan. 27, at 7p.m. at the Boston Center for the

Arts. Tickets are available at the Elma Lewis School, Red Book and 100 Flowers in Cambridge, and at New Words bookstore in Somerville... Oh, just a bit more theatrical indulgence here. The Loeb Drama Center has announced their winter schedule. Of the more interesting performances are: The National Theatre of the Deaf presenting Gertrude Stein's "Four Saints in Three Acts." Other shorter pieces are included. Chekov's "The Harmfulness of Tobacco" is among them. After the Jan. 31 - Feb. 1 presentation they will offer the Lar Lubovitch Company of Dance opening Feb. 3 for three performances. Call the Center for further information and schedules. 864-2630... Tra-la, tra-la, Jade and Sarsaparilla return to Boston to a much more intimate locale. They will open Jan. 31 at Copley Plaza's Merry-Go-Round. Please remember that "proper" attire is requested and avoid hassles at the door... For those fans of John Rechy, author of City of Night, you won't be disappointed with his new endeavor, The Sexual Outlaw. I received the proof from Grove Press

and it seems as though it will be every bit as naked as his previous works... And you thought the straight-crowd only watched the way you cut your hair or the fashions you wore? Wrong again. The Village Voice had a nice capsule on the booming popularity of synthetic "poppers" arriving on the market. Companies promoting such analogous commodities as "Bullet," "Rush," and "Locker Room" are gearing slick advertising for the straight public. That I should like to see. Perhaps Margaux H. will be oozing down the side of some male equivalent over the caption: "Give him Jac-Aroma and make him a legend in his own time." Now, what kind of legend would that be?... Do not forget Gerry Takano's exhibit at the Gay Men's Center at 8:30 on Jan. 28. He's graced our pages many times. Now you can have the opportunity to let him grace your walls. His pictures, silly... Here's my note for this week. The winter season is a slump for everyone, us included. It's time to run some functions not only as a benefit but to bring some gay-sponsored entertainment into the community. It's easy to sit here and imagine all sorts of affairs but it is equally easy to forget what kinds of things you might like to see. We would appreciate some suggestions. Would you enjoy a film festival, a concert, a gala party? What? How about some feedback. It's difficult to produce in an elite vacuum, so send in your cards and letters and give us some ideas. Give us your ideas. Merci...

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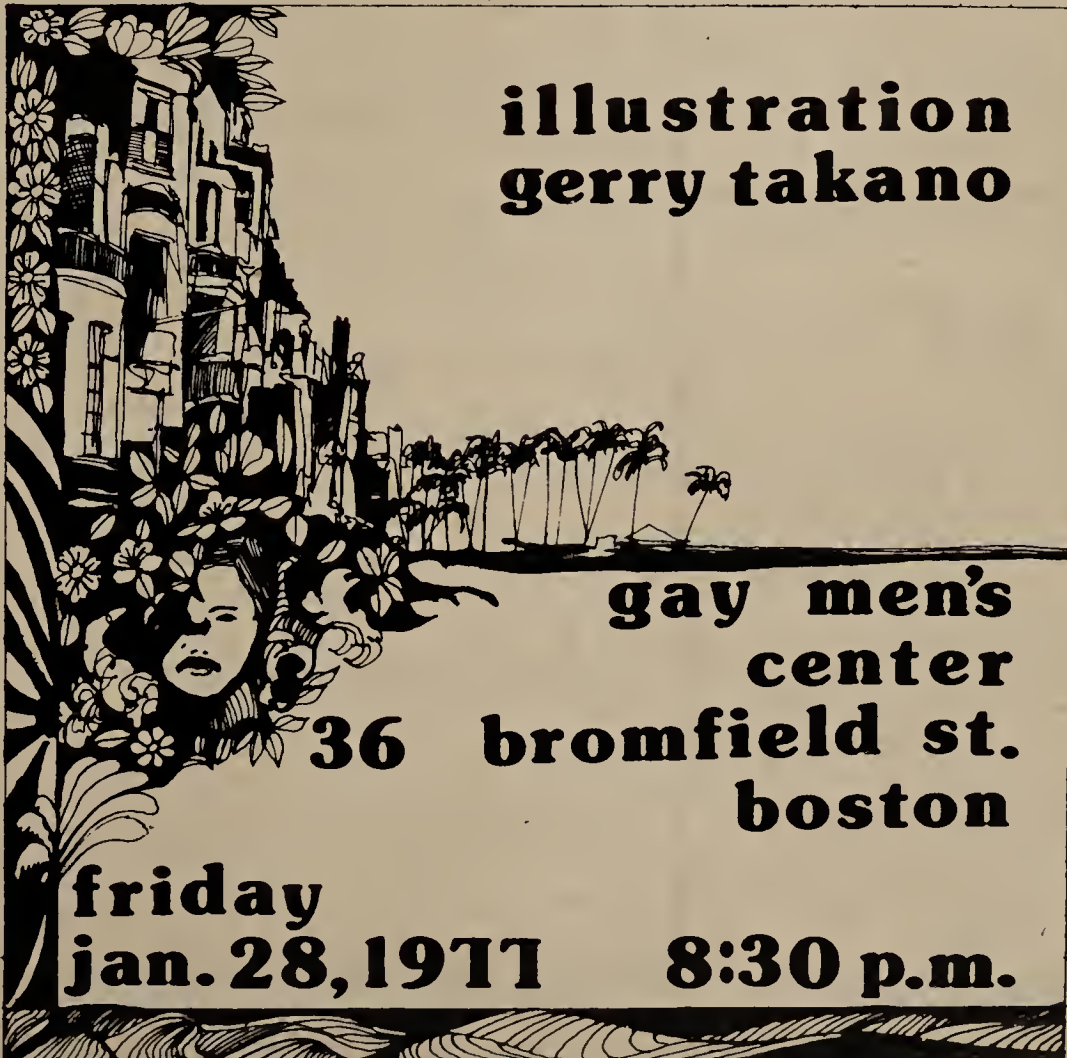
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Gay Men's Center, 36 Bromfield St. 338-7967
Gay Nurses' Alliance-East, P.O. Box 530, Back Bay Annex, Boston, MA 02117
Gay People of UMass/Boston 287-1900 (ext. 2396)

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Gay Brotherhood of Rochester, 713 Monroe Ave., Rochester 14607 (716) 244-8640
Gay Community Service Ctr., 1350 Main St., Buffalo 14209
Gay Liberation Front/U. of R., Todd Hall, River Campus, U. of R., Rochester, 14627 (716) 275-6181
Gayphone (Mon-Sat 7-11) 423-3599
Gay Students Assoc., 103 College Pl., Syracuse 423-2081
Lesbian Resource Center (formerly GROW), 713 Monroe Ave., Rochester 14607 (716) 244-9030
Stonewall Society, Poughkeepsie (914) 471-8885



calendar



25 tues

Boston — DOB discussion group for older gay women, 419 Boylston St., rm. 323, 7:30pm.

Boston — Gay Men's Center Forum will host Dave Peterson of Gay Speakers Bureau, 7:30pm, 36 Bromfield St.

NYC — West Side Discussion Group meeting, 37 Ninth Ave., 8pm; social hour follows; \$2 donation.

26 wed

NYC — West Side Discussion Group for women only, 37 Ninth Ave., 8pm, "Role Playing, Why?"

28 fri

Worcester, MA — Men's Closed Sexuality Rap will be meeting through April; last session for men to join the group, 7:30pm, 2 Wellington St.

Boston — Graphics exhibit by Jerry Takano (works in GCN) at Gay Men's Center, 36 Bromfield St., 8:30 pm.

29 sat

Boston — Disco at Gay Men's Center, 9 pm-1 am, 36 Bromfield St.



30 sun

New Haven, CT — A lobbying workshop will be part of the CT Gay Task Force's all-day activities at Partner's Cafe, Crown & Park Sts. Info call 522-5575.

Worcester, MA — Planning meeting for New England Gay Conference called by R.I.C. Gay Alliance, noon, 2 Wellington St., bring your ideas for workshops.

31 mon

Providence, RI — Men's Closed Sexuality Rap begins at 7:30, will meet alternate Mon. thru May 9, 5 Junction St., this first session is open to all males.

1 tues

Charlestown, MA — Charlestown Gay Neighbors are invited to attend a social gathering at 7:30 pm. Bring refreshments or food, for place of meeting call 241-7535 after 5:30.

2 wed

Cambridge, MA — Women's Community Health sponsors 4-week Lesbian Self Help Group beginning tonight at 137 Hampshire St. For info call 547-2302.

4 fri

Boston — Celtics vs. Lakers, if you are a basketball player, watcher or dreamer you are invited to attend a group outing to see the above mentioned teams play. Game time will be 7:30 p.m., we will be buying \$5 tickets. Money must be received by noon, Feb. 1. For info call Chip at 267-4756, or bring money to George D. at the GCN office. Tickets will be distributed Fri., Jan. 28 at 6:30 p.m. at GCN, 22 Bromfield St. Sponsored by GRAC.

5 sat

Northwood, NH — Daughters of Bilitis social gathering and pot luck supper. for info write "Occupant" P.O. Box 137, Northwood, NH 03261.



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